

Dear Friends,

While it's been some time since the previous Everglades National Park General Management Plan (GMP) newsletter, the planning team has been using the substantial public input received in 2003 and 2004 to develop the management alternatives that will be the basis for the draft GMP/ environmental impact statement (EIS).

We look forward to sharing considerable planning information with you in 2006, and just as important, getting your views and suggestions on the range of options for managing and protecting the unique resources of Everglades National Park that are being considered.

Based on public input and a recent management review of the Everglades National Park GMP project, the National Park Service has decided to expand the scope of the plan to include a Wilderness Study for the East Everglades Expansion Area lands.

Expanding the scope of the GMP to include the East Everglades Wilderness Study will result in efficiency and cost savings in the long-range planning and decision making for the park and the unique resources of the East Everglades. The expanded planning process will fully consider all legislated uses and designations and will result in a viable management plan for the entire park, including the East Everglades Expansion Area (also called the East Everglades Addition). As a result of this expanded scope for the GMP, the National Park Service will be soliciting additional information from the public related to the East Everglades Wilderness Study. If you have previously submitted comments regarding East Everglades wilderness issues during previous steps in the GMP process, you do not need to re-submit your comments.

I appreciate your continued interest and involvement in the GMP process. Many of you have expressed your ideas and concerns about the park and its future, and we look forward to continuing the dialogue with you. Your input has been, and will continue to be, invaluable in helping us plan for the future of Everglades National Park.

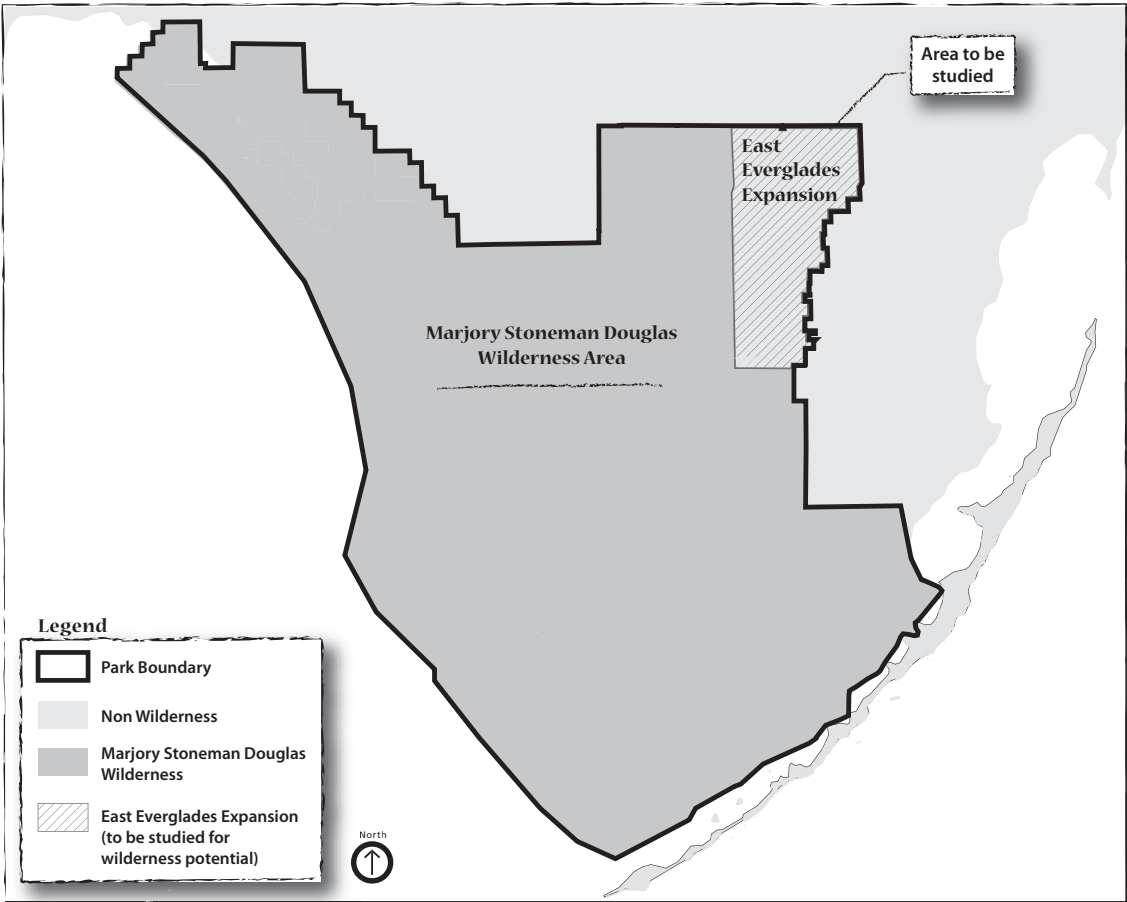
Sincerely,

Dan Kimball  
Superintendent

OVERVIEW

In 1989 a 109,600-acre area was added to Everglades National Park as part of the Everglades National Park Protection and Expansion Act (16 USC 410r-5). The Act's purpose is to "increase the level of protection of the outstanding natural values of Everglades National Park and to enhance and restore the ecological values, natural hydrological conditions, and public enjoyment of such area by adding the area commonly known as the Northeast Shark River Slough and the East Everglades..." In addition, lands were added to "assure that the park is managed in order to maintain the natural abundance, diversity, and ecological integrity of the native plants and animals, as well as the behavior of native animals, as part of their ecosystem."

The Act also authorized the Secretary of the Interior to utilize other statutory authority that may be available and necessary for the preservation of wildlife and natural resources. This includes carrying out the provisions of the Wilderness Act.



The Wilderness Act, Code of Federal Regulations Title 43 - Part 19 Wilderness Preservation, Secretarial Order 2920, and 2001 NPS Management Policies require that the NPS review roadless and undeveloped areas, including new areas or expanded boundaries, within the National Park System to determine whether or not they are suitable for preserving as wilderness.

In 1978, Congress designated 1.3 million acres of Everglades National Park as the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness to be managed under the terms of the Wilderness Act. The entire East Everglades Expansion Area is contiguous to the Marjory Stoneman Douglas Wilderness, except for the strip of land that forms the L-67 extension canal and levee.

The East Everglades Wilderness Study will be conducted as a collaborative public process that is integrated into the Everglades National Park GMP/EIS, insuring full public involvement in identifying issues, developing alternatives, and analyzing impacts.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Please attend one of the following meetings to provide input on potential wilderness in East Everglades. The planning team will be available to answer questions and record our comments. These will be open houses, so feel free to drop by at any time between X:XX and X:XX pm.	
Date	Location
Dates, times and Locations TBD	

The following is the specific language from the Act regarding airboating in the East Everglades Addition:

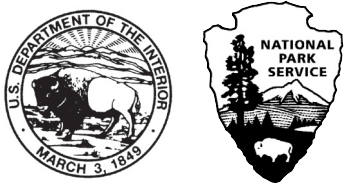
For private airboating: "...park shall be closed to the operation of airboats...except that within a limited capacity and on designated routes within the addition, owners of record of registered airboats in use within the addition as of January 1, 1989, shall be issued nontransferable, nonrenewable permits, for their individual lifetimes, to operate personally-owned airboats for non-commercial use in accordance with rules prescribed by the Secretary to determine ownership and registration, establish uses, permit conditions, and penalties, and to protect the biological resources of the area.

Specific to commercial airboat operations: "...The Secretary is authorized to negotiate and enter into concession contracts with the owners of commercial airboat and tour facilities in existence on or before January 1, 1989, located within the addition for the provision of such services at their current locations under such rules and conditions as he may deem necessary for the accommodation of visitors and protection of biological resources of the area".

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
DENVER SERVICE CENTER  
12795 WEST ALAMEDA PARKWAY  
PO Box 25287  
DENVER CO 80225-0287

FIRST-CLASS MAIL  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
PERMIT NO. G-83

OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE \$300



WILDERNESS STUDY PROCESS

The wilderness study process will examine the entire East Everglades Expansion Area. The area will be studied for wilderness characteristics as defined in the Wilderness Act of 1964 (16 USC 1132): A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean [ . . . ] an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man’s work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

STEPS IN THE NPS WILDERNESS STUDY PROCESS

1. Lands that may possess the characteristics and values of wilderness, as defined in the Wilderness Act, are studied by the NPS to determine their suitability for possible wilderness designation.
2. The findings and conclusions of the formal wilderness study will be forwarded by the National Park Service Director to the Department of the Interior.
3. The Secretary of the Interior is responsible for recommending to the President those lands that meet the necessary criteria for wilderness designation.
4. The President is then responsible for transmitting to both houses of Congress his recommendations with respect to wilderness designation.
5. Congress then considers the President’s recommendation and may subsequently enact legislation to include the area in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

SCHEDULE

Planning Activity	Dates
• Public scoping meetings	Spring 2006
• Revise Alternatives	Summer/Fall 2006
• Revised Alternative Newsletter and Public meetings	Fall 2006
• Preparation of Draft GMP/ Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)	2007
• Final GMP/EIS and Record of Decision	2008

INTEGRATING THE WILDERNESS STUDY WITH THE GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

The initial step in integrating the East Everglades Wilderness Study with the GMP is the publishing of the *Notice of Intent* in the *Federal Register* and release of this newsletter. These documents announce a change to the scope of the GMP to include the East Everglades Wilderness Study, and re-opens the public scoping period, focusing on wilderness issues that should be considered for the East Everglades Addition lands. The intent is to solicit comments and information from the public and park stakeholders as to whether or not, and to what extent, a portion of the East Everglades Expansion Area should ultimately be recommended for wilderness designation. This input will be integrated with the draft management concepts and zoning options developed to date as part of the GMP process and shared with the public in GMP Newsletter #4 later this year. The public will have the opportunity to review and comment on the preliminary alternatives described in the newsletter at public workshops to be held throughout South Florida. Other opportunities to comment by mail and through the internet will be provided.

How Can I be a Part of the Wilderness Study Planning Process?

Public participation is essential to developing a successful plan. You may provide the planning team with your thoughts and suggestions on the East Everglades Wilderness Study in several ways:

1. Submit written comments (use the enclosed comment form or a send a separate letter) to: Superintendent, Everglades National Park, 40001 State Road 9336, Homestead, FL, 33034-6733 or by fax to: 305-242-7711.
2. Submit comments via the NPS planning website: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov>.
3. Attend one of the public meetings listed on page 1 of this newsletter.

All comments must be received by the end of the scoping period, xxxxxxx, xx, 2006 (30 days following publishing in the *Federal Register*).

THANK YOU FOR YOUR  
INTEREST IN EVERGLADES  
NATIONAL PARK!